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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Deb Fairhurst Wins 2015 Excellence in GIS Award

INDIANAPOLIS - Deb Fairhurst, Program Manager of Accountability and Technology for the Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) - Division of Soil Conservation, received the 2015 Excellence in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Award from the Indiana Geographic Information Council at the group's annual conference in Bloomington this week.

The Excellence in GIS Award recognizes an organization for creative and practical applications of GIS in Indiana and also recognizes an organization that has recently pushed the envelope of GIS technology through the innovative development of a unique technology service or application to produce new benefit streams.

Fairhurst developed an effective tool that illustrates the importance of the Indiana Conservation Partnership (ICP) workload impact of best agricultural practices and nutrient load reductions by watersheds across Indiana. Partnering with local, state and federal agencies, she initiated the uniform adaptation of the USEPA Region 5 Load Reduction Model, which shows nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment reductions achieved by farmers statewide.

"We thank Deb Fairhurst for her ongoing dedication for the Division of Soil Conservation and congratulate her on this achievement," said ISDA Director Ted McKinney. "We believe this tool will greatly benefit soil conservation not only to Indiana, but nationally in a multitude of ways."

With the methodology for tracking nutrient and sediment reductions from local, state and federally assisted-conservation projects, Indiana has been hailed by the USEPA as a national leader and a prime example for such efforts on a statewide scale. Due to Fairhurst's actions, the conservation community in Indiana will be able to better monitor conservation practices, account for environmentally beneficial water quality trends, and continue to keep hundreds of millions of pounds in nutrients and sediment from entering Indiana waters.

To date, the maps and methodology created by Fairhurst are the most comprehensive and widely-distributed demonstrations of the ICP's successes. In addition, these maps will be utilized by USEPA and the Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia Task Force in a Congressional report on nutrient reduction efforts in the Mississippi River Basin. The load reduction maps and methodology can be found by visiting www.in.gov/isda/2991.htm.

ABOUT ISDA

The Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) was established as a separate state agency by the Legislature in 2005. The Director of ISDA is appointed by the Governor and is a member of the Governor's Cabinet. Administratively, ISDA reports to Lt. Governor Sue Ellspermann, who also serves as Indiana's Secretary of Agriculture. Major responsibilities include advocacy for Indiana agriculture at the local, state and federal level, managing soil conservation programs, promoting economic development and agricultural innovation, serving as a regulatory ombudsman for agricultural businesses, and licensing grain firms throughout the state.

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